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The Spectator

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Publishing the Truth, From Good Motives and For Justifiable Ends

WHOOP: how far was Women's Soccer willing to go for a historic season?

by Stella Karron '23
INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER & OPINION EDITOR

Editor's note: asteriks adjacent to names signify that a pseudonym has been used per the request of the interviewee.

In Fall 2021, Hamilton Women's Soccer had an undefeated home season, a No. 17 ranking in the NCAA Division III league and a spot in the NESCAC semifinals. Players achieved this success in part with the help of WHOOP: a wearable fitness band that, according to the WHOOP website, "monitors your sleep, recovery, and daily effort around the clock to deliver actionable insights on how you can optimize your performance." In July, players received their WHOOPs via mail, and their coaches instructed them to wear the WHOOPS at all times.

Additionally, players and Women's Soccer Head Coach Colette Gilligan had access to the entire team's personal health data via a leaderboard. The leaderboard used a numerical system to rank each player based on their athletic performance. The numerical system calculated on a log scale from 0-21, with a score of 21 being the highest. The system analyzed each player's WHOOP data to determine the player's score (and subsequently their ranking). For example, if one player ran five miles one day, the numerical system would rank that player above another who did not exercise or had exercised less that day.

PHOTO BY WHOOP

This tool has never been used at Hamilton before. "It was such a foreign thing... What is this? Does it track you?" said Olive*. She continued. saying: "I remember during summer training I'd be like, oh my God, this girl did a 16 value workout, which is really high. I only did 10. I'd just feel that pressure, that unnecessary pressure to do more."

Instead of players using the WHOOP as a personal exercise and progress tracker, the summer leaderboard made the WHOOP a means for athletes to measure and compare themselves to their teammates, pushing some to want to be the hardest working player. "It's you comparing yourself to other people with different bodies, different lifestyles," said Lucy*. "It was just really, really not good."

"There were a couple of days where it was shared at the beginning of the year," said Coach Gilligan. "That was my lack of knowledge and knowing how it functions and once I realized....it was turned off." The team deactivated the leaderboard on Aug. 28, a week after players arrived on campus.

Rylie Mutton '23 said she refused to join the WHOOP page until the team deactivated the leaderboard. "I could not do that. I can't look at other people's calories. Let's say I'm having a hard day and I just can't work out today. If I went on that and saw that everyone else went for a run and had a 19 strain, and I'm at the bottom, with a four strain, just walking around, that wouldn't feel good."

The idea of using the WHOOP came from Isabella Roselli '22, who personally used one as a way to monitor her fitness after tearing her ACL. She proposed using the WHOOP as a team activity so everyone could monitor their own fitness. "We wanted to better ourselves as athletes, have a better season, have a stronger season and compete, which is what everyone on this team wanted," said Roselli.

PHOTO BY TRUSTED REVIEWS

In addition to monitoring their fitness though the WHOOP, the team implemented a zero tolerance alcohol policy, commonly referred to as playing through a "dry season." "I looked at the last three years of records, when [players] would go out, and how that affected our next weekend," said Coach Gilligan.

By examining previous schedules and identifying Saturdays that the team had off (i.e. Saturdays when the team could go out and drink), Coach Gilligan's research concluded that the next weekend, Women's Soccer would not win their game. Hamilton Men's Rowing has historically instituted a full dry season, and many other teams have policies that forbids players from drinking 24, 48 or 72 hours before their game.

At a team meeting in Spring 2021, Coach Gilligan brought up the idea of using the WHOOP. Players then held meetings without the coach to discuss the decision, and eventually committed to wearing them for the full season, with some wearing them the summer prior as well.

The inspiration behind using a product like WHOOP came from constraints on the team's activity during the 2020-2021 academic year. Due to COVID-19, the team could

not finish out their season. Instead, they used that year as a reflection period for discussing where they wanted to be as a team once they could play again. "We finished fifth in the NESCAC after my freshman year, so this year, Collete asked us what our goal was, and we all agreed that we wanted to get a NCAA bid," said Mutton.

Only the top four teams in the NESCAC get NCAA bids, meaning that the Hamilton team would have to place at least one spot higher than their 2019 NESCAC ranking in order to get a bid in 2021. The team realized that they needed to change their behavior during and outside of practice to achieve this goal. "This doesn't come by just speaking words, you have to act upon it," said Isabella Rosselli '22.

Lucy* was worried that her coaches would keep track of sleep schedules using the WHOOP: "What happens if we're staying out late at night? And it's like three o'clock? Will we be reprimanded for this?"

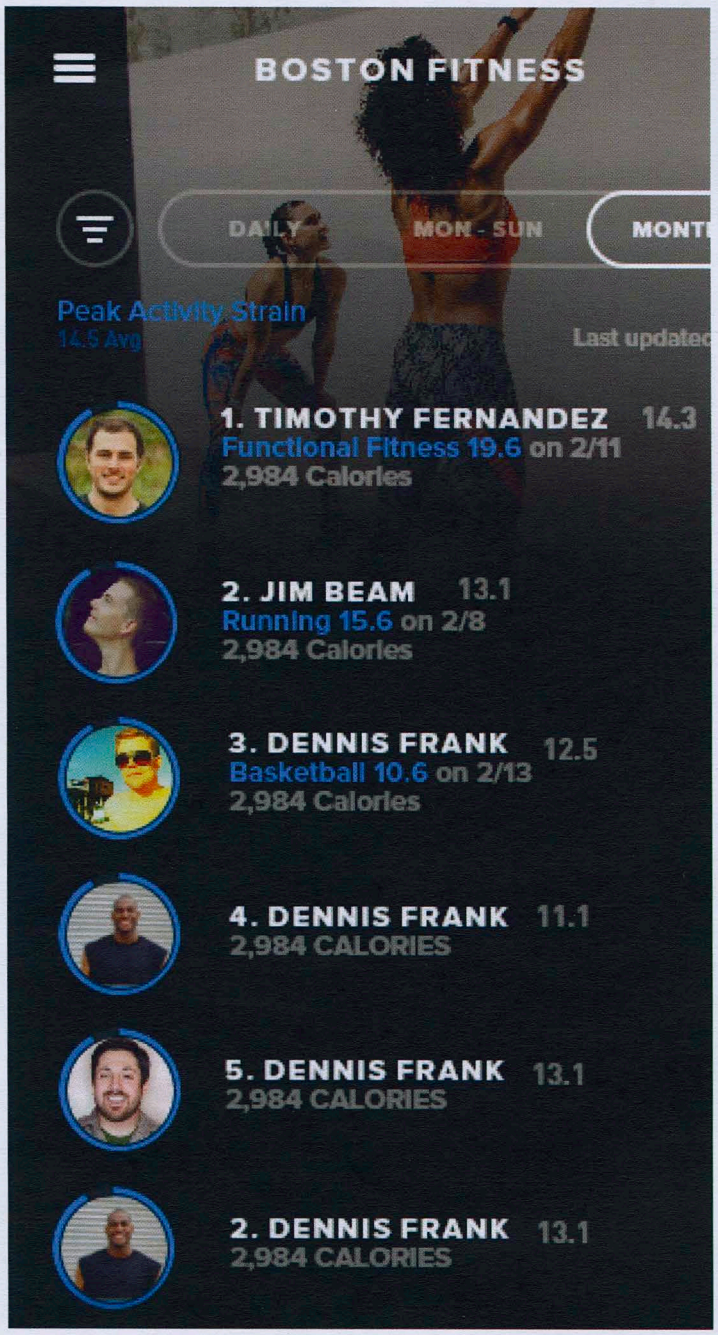

PHOTO BY WHOOP SUPPORT

An example of the leaderboard that players would see upon opening the app.

One feature of the WHOOP tracks sleep performance, efficiency and consistency. It shows when players were in "deep sleep", when they woke up and when they should go to bed. Olive* was also anxious of the coaches' judgements and decisions on playing time based on WHOOP data. "If she sees me at X amount of sleep, there's no context around that. So she could be like, oh, this girl is just not working on a recovery. I was worried about that aspect."

Lucy* and Olive* felt that monitored sleep schedules would put themselves under a microscope that extended beyond the field. "[Coach Gilligan] wasn't transparent about how she was going to use the information, so we were all kind of on edge, thinking, is she going to use it against us?" said Lucy*.

After Coach Gilligan learned about *The Spectator*'s investigation regarding Women's Soccer's WHOOP and dry season policies, she sent an email to all of her players telling them that she would "like to know if you know ANYTHING about this."

Gilligan later said that WHOOP "allowed me to better manage practice and not put players at risk for injury. For them as individuals, it just allowed them a ton more information on how their body is actually working."

During practices, the coaches used the metrics from the WHOOPs to adapt drills for different players and for individual recovery needs. "Everyday [before practice] I would go to recovery and click on this and see who was in the red," explained Gilligan.

The WHOOP places players into three zones—red, yellow and green. A player is placed in the red zone when their recovery score is between zero and twenty percent. The red zone shows that a player has pushed herself to the limit, and that they need to recover before they exercise again. Gilligan used this measurement to monitor her players: "If you are in the red for a couple of days, you should probably not be practicing, because, if you're practicing under high intensity conditions, you run the risk of injury."

Mutton explained that Gilligan once separated players for recovery. "Once she came up to us and said: "Oh, you played most of the game and you worked really hard, your legs must be really tired. Take the last half of practice and go to the pool and shake out your legs."

In addition to indicating intense exercising, the red zone also highlights irregularity in a player's general routine. For Coach Gilligan, this was also a useful tool. "It brought about further conversations… [like] have you been sleeping or, do you have a lot going on academically?"

In general, these conversations did not bother the players; if the WHOOP indicated that they were in the red zone, they knew Gilligan would ask them about it, and that she would not reprimand them. "I was in the red for three days, so I was kind of anticipating her coming up to me on the third day, she just brought me aside, it wasn't that bad" remarked Olive*.

Now, despite initial concerns, players have grown accustomed to the WHOOP. "The fact that she has access to it doesn't really cross your mind anymore" said Lucy*. On a day-to-day basis, "Coach doesn't vocalize her usage of it. So she's not like "so-and-so, you're in the green and you're in the red, maybe you should take it easy." Now, it's just become more of a personal thing," explained Olive*.

Players have also found the WHOOP beneficial for personal reasons. For example, Mutton uses her WHOOP data to track her sleep: "[the device will] send me an alert. Oh, it's time to start getting ready for bed, you need nine hours of sleep tonight. And I'm like, oh, I better go to bed." For others, it is a motivator to work harder, on and off the field: "If my strain is really high, then I want to keep getting it up," explained Lucy*.

Still, she remarked that some players still have some concerns. "The WHOOP makes you feel like you're doing less, even though you're doing the same amount. If your strain is low, you almost feel like you're not reaching your goals … some people on the team will look at it and be like, oh, my strain is really low. I'm going to go on another run."

Women's Soccer is the first Hamilton team to simultaneously institute a dry season and the WHOOP. These new policies contributed to the Women's Soccer team's best season in recent memory.

However, this season was cut short when the team lost in the NESCAC semi finals to Wesleyan. The team was without over ten players for this game because Coach Gilligan suspended those players for breaching the "dry season" policy.

Coach Gilligan argued that the team chose to implement the WHOOP and the dry season policies because players "did want an increase in competitiveness and compared to how we did in NESCAC [last year] they wanted to go to a final four in NESCAC. They wanted to go to the NCAA tournament. So, from us as a coaching staff... what do we need to adapt or change to make us better?"

Hi everyone,

We at *The Spec* wish you all luck with finals coming up in the next couple of weeks. This period is always a difficult time of the semester for all of us, so make sure you are taking care of yourself and getting enough rest. :)

Hang in there,
Cole and Emma Mae

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Letters to the Editor are welcome from all students, alumni/ae, faculty, friends of the college, and Hamilton community members.

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1. Submissions are due by 10:00 p.m. on the Monday before publication. The editors reserve the right to refuse any late submissions.
2. Letters should be no longer than 500 words. The editors reserve the right to cut off letters at 500 words.
3. Letters submitted anonymously will not be printed.
4. *The Spectator* reserves the right not to publish any letter it deems inappropriate for publication.
5. If a piece is determined to be libelous, an unwarranted invasion of privacy, or an unnecessary and/or unwarranted ad hominem or personal attack, it will not be published.

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Students participate in Lighting of Our Village

by Spencer Royal '22
STAFF WRITER

Hamilton College celebrated its third annual Lighting of Our Village ceremony, organized by Student Activities, on the evening of Nov. 30 near the Sadove Student Center. Students celebrated what light means to different cultural and faith traditions and its value as a symbol of hope. Student event organizer Chloé Maldonado '23 said, "we get together as a community and talk about light in terms of culture and tradition, and we bring out as many clubs and organizations that want to come and speak."

The line of students awaiting complementary coffee mugs, gloves, and raffle tickets stretched from the doors of Sadove to the other side of the large tree opposite the building. Inside Sadove, students enjoyed hot chocolate, cookies, homemade apple cider and other activities like appreciation card writing and polaroid photography.

The main portion of the event included thoughts and remarks from various student organizations on the role of light in various faith and cultural traditions. Outside Sadove, fireprits blazed, and students with sparklers and hot chocolates first heard from the Skenandoah Kirkland Initiative, which offered a land acknowledgment. After, President David Wippman and Interim Dean of Students Nancy Thompson remarked on the significance of the event. "We wanted to brighten things up. Light is an important metaphor for colleges and universities," said Wippman. As winter's chill and its early sunsets descend on campus, Thompson asked students to "be the light, and brighten someone's day," especially as students face final examinations in the coming weeks.

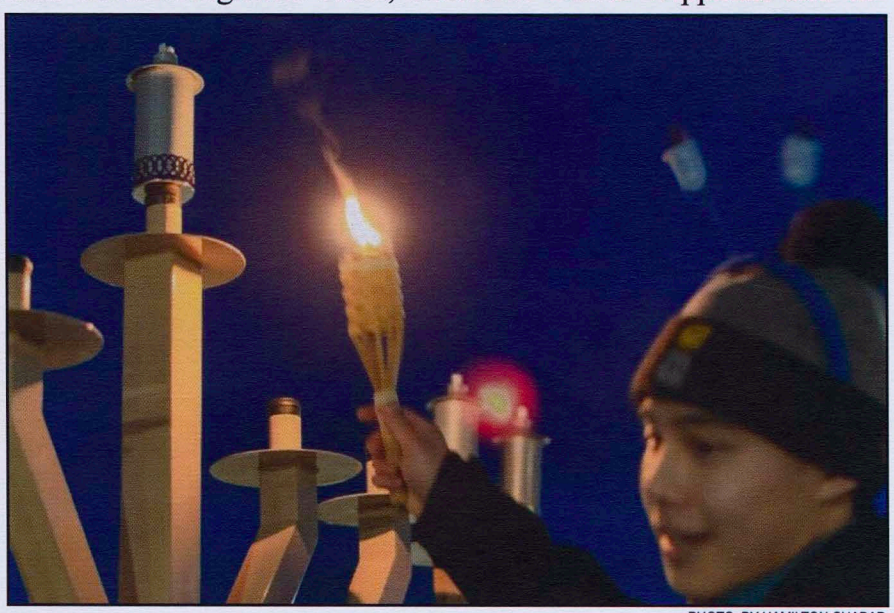


PHOTO BY HAMILTON CHABAD

A student from Chabad lights menorah to celebrate Hannukah.

PHOTO BY NORBU LHENDUP '25

The path overlooking the Health Center dotted with hanging lights.

The Black and Latinx Student Union (BLSU) spoke on the significance and origins of Kwanzaa and the meaning of festivals' associated colors, red, black and green. The All Beliefs Union (ABU) offered remarks on the Christmas tradition. The South Asian branch of the Asian Student Union (SASA) discussed the Diwali tradition. Members of Hillel, including Rachel O'Brien '24 and Bruce Leight '25, lit the menorah that stands on Martins Way in front of Sadove, and sang the three blessings, as well as other songs.

At around 7:30 p.m., Student Activities turned on the lights adorning trees, benches and light posts in the Beinecke Student Village. Lucy Zullo '25 said of the event, "it's really exciting, and it looks really nice." Duelly Noted and Buffers sang *Carissima*, followed by seasonal songs. The arrival of a Crepe Truck, which remained late into the evening, capped off the event. "It's getting darker during the day, but having these ceremonies reminds us of unity on this campus," said James Gallagher '24.

PHOTO BY HAMILTON COLLEGE

Students do their best Disney Channel impressions as they take a long exposure photo with their sparklers and show off some cheery school spirit!

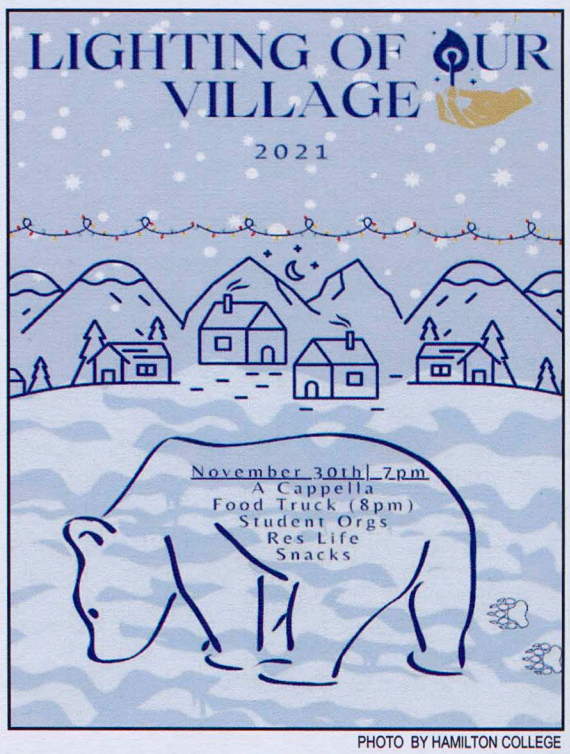


PHOTO BY HAMILTON COLLEGE

December 2, 2021

DMC workers and RAs begin union process

by Lizzie Herr '24
NEWS CONTRIBUTOR

On Sept. 24, students admissions workers voted in favor of unionization. After numerous concerns with the Office of Admissions related to the denial to raise hourly wages, payment to workers via gift cards and their plan to restart in-person tours during the pandemic, frustrated students filed to join a union with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The majority of student admissions workers who came out to vote voted in favor of this bill, leading the way for other student employment groups on campus to also file for a union via the NLRB. Both student employees from the Days-Massolo Center (DMC) and Residential Life followed suit in the following months and organized in an effort to unionize.

Amidst the admissions workers vote to unionize, other student employment groups began discussions about unionizing within their own employment groups. Ivy Wheeler '22, a worker at the Days-Massolo Center, said that several of her student co-workers approached her about whether she would support a DMC effort to unionize before they actually filed with the NLRB. According to Wheeler, unionization appealed to many DMC workers, especially since they saw a decrease in working hours due to the pandemic and a growing student worker staff.

While many admissions workers sought to unionize as a result of alleged unfair treatment by their employer, Wheeler, during the process of organizing with the DMC, said, "a lot of the students we talked to didn't experience mistreatment in the workplace, and respect their supervisor a lot." Although many workers may be a part of a healthy work environment, Wheeler spoke to the importance of unionization no matter what the conditions are, as unionization "means equalizing the dynamic between employers and employees; giving yourself leverage and putting yourself in a better position to advocate for yourself and others."

In terms of what DMC student employees hope to see in joining a union, Wheeler spoke to greater student involvement in decision-making. Despite the collaborative work environment of the DMC, Wheeler believes the "unionization would sort of institutionalize that collaboration on a broader level." From her perspective, the main issue of the decrease of worker hours was that students were not involved in the conversation about decisions about their changing working conditions. She suggests that the voices of DMC workers in that situation would have been much likely to have been heard if they had the backing of a union.

On Dec. 13, student workers from both the DMC and Residential Life are scheduled to vote on unionization, although Wheeler warned that the Hamilton administration has been working to postpone this election by deeming these groups of students as not actual workers. More information is pending as the voting date grows closer.

Campus Safety Incident Report

In an effort to respect discretion, *The Spectator* and Campus Safety have not disclosed the idenities of the students involved in these reports.

Thurs., Nov. 18

12:10 a.m. Trouble Alarm -- Babbitt Residence Hall

8:47 a.m. Parking Complaint -- Morris House

1:16 p.m. Area Check -- Couper Hall

Fri., Nov. 19

3:44 p.m. Medical Emergency -- Root Hall

5:52 p.m. Medical Emergency -- Bristol Pool

Sat., Nov. 20

12:22 a.m. Assist -- Off Campus Location

4:03 a.m. Motorist Assist -- Minor Residence Hall

8:47 a.m. Concern For Welfare -- North Campus

9:29 a.m. Trouble Alarm -- South Campus

4:35 p.m. Security Alarm -- Mail Center

Sun., Nov. 21

4:16 p.m. Trouble Alarm -- KTSA

4:24 p.m. Trespassing Complaint -- Rogers Glenn

6:40 p.m. Trouble Alarm -- KTSA

9:24 p.m. Animal Complaint -- C.A Johnson

Mon., Nov. 22

7:33 a.m. Medical Emergency -- Milbank Residence Hall

2:41 p.m. Complaint -- 95 College Hill Road

Wed., Nov. 24

7:53 p.m. Area Check -- Keehn Residence Hall

Thurs., Nov. 25

1:15 a.m. Trouble Alarm -- Kirkland Residence Hall

4:20 a.m. Trouble Alarm -- Kirkland Residence Hall

11:46 p.m. Trouble Alarm -- Skenandoa Residence Hall

Fri., Nov. 26

8:22 p.m. Medical Emergency -- Root Residence Hall

Sat., Nov. 27

7:38 a.m. Trouble Alarm -- South Campus

9:36 a.m. Trouble Alarm -- North Campus

10:04 a.m. Concern For Welfare -- Campus Safety Building

12:09 p.m. Concern For Welfare -- South Campus

12:49 p.m. Fire Alarm -- South Campus

Sun., Nov. 28

2:41 a.m. Trouble Alarm -- Milbank Residence Hall

11:21 p.m. Trouble Alarm -- Bundy West Residence Hall

Mon., Nov. 29

9:33 p.m. Area Check -- Keehn Residence Hall

9:37 p.m. Animal Complaint -- Skenandoa Residence Hall

10:50 p.m. Medical Emergency -- Major Residence Hall

Wed., Dec. 1

2:22 a.m. Trouble Alarm -- South Campus

Suzanne Keen accepts role at Scripps College

by Anoushka Aswin '25
STAFF WRITER

Suzanne Keen, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Faculty, will be departing from Hamilton College to join Scripps College as their tenth president. President Wippman sent an announcement regarding Keen's departure on Nov. 18, citing her leave as "a great loss for Hamilton." Keen, who was appointed to Hamilton's faculty in July 2018, had a distinguished career inside and outside of the College.

At Hamilton, Keen worked on a number of groups intended to improve the learning experience at Hamilton. She launched the Hamilton Academy program, with the goal of providing a space for faculty and staff to have open discussions over the best strategies for professional development. She was also an active supporter of AHA! (Autonomous Hamilton Affinity) Groups. The program provides funding to faculty members with projects that work to better the Hamilton community, placing importance on diversity, equity and inclusion development. Keen was also a representative for Hamilton on the Liberal Arts Collaborative for Digital Innovation and on the NESCAC, New York Six and Northeast Deans organizations.

"I am immensely proud of the brilliant Hamilton College faculty," says Keen, "I have had a hand in hiring several dozen new faculty, with good results in hiring great people from under-represented groups. That's been a fulfilling effort—it's the work of many hands. I have enjoyed raising funds for the humanities, for Book Arts, for new faculty lines and for the new Special Collections Outreach Librarian. It has been a tremendous pleasure supporting the Wellin Museum of Art and engaging with the world-class artists whose work has been featured in solo shows there."

Keen holds an esteemed position in the literature field, with widespread publications about topics ranging from contemporary British fiction to narrative empathy. Her book, *Thomas Hardy's Brains*: *Psychology, Neurology, and Hardy's Imagination*, published in 2014, considered for a Christian Gauss Award. Before working at Hamilton, Keen received her Bachelor's degree at Brown University, where she was elected to the Phi Beta Kappa Honors Society. She received her Ph.D. in English language and literature at Harvard University. She held teaching positions at Yale University as well as Washington and Lee University, where she was promoted to Dean of the College in 2013.

PHOTO BY HAMILTON COLLEGE

Suzanne Keen has had a prominent presence on the Hill as Dean of Faculty that will be missed by students and staff alike.

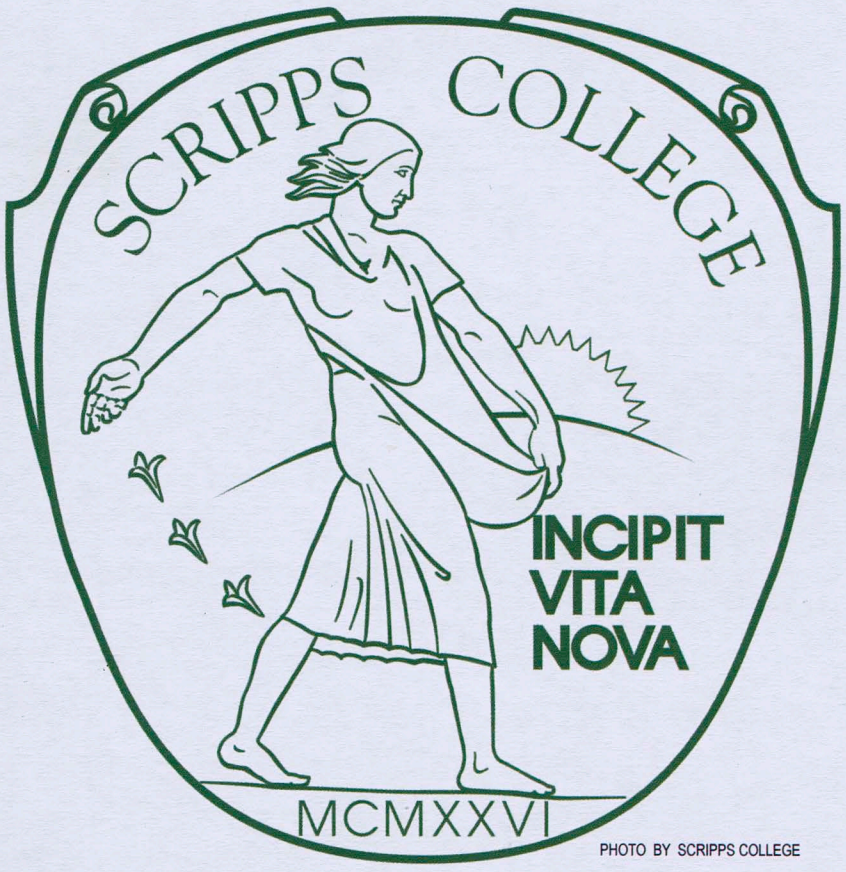


PHOTO BY SCRIPPS COLLEGE

Keen will be taking over the Presidency at this women's college.

Keen's newest role will be at Scripps College, a private women's liberal arts college in California. Their mission statement is "to educate women to develop their intellects and talents through active participation in a community of scholars, so that as graduates they may contribute to society through public and private lives of leadership, service, integrity, and creativity." Keen resonates strongly with this mission, as she looks forward to working in a women-empowering environment.

When describing what she most looks forward to in her new role, Keen reports, "As a feminist scholar and woman in senior administration, I am so excited about leading a woman-centered college. Scripps is the women's college of the Claremont Colleges. And now that the snow is falling, it would be dishonest of me not to mention the sunny southern California weather. There are citrus fruits and olives growing on the Scripps campus."

Keen's notable work at Hamilton College will make her position hard to fill. President Wippman's email explains that there will be a national search conducted to find her successor. Assisted by Isaacson Miller, the goal will be to find a new Dean of Faculty by July.

When asked what she will most miss about the Hamilton community, Keen responded "I will most of all miss my many friends on the faculty, administration and staff. I will be counting on all of them to post pictures of the fall colors, the blanket of snow and the Saunders peonies in bloom so I can vicariously enjoy the four seasons on the Hill."

The Hamilton community wishes her congratulations and the best of luck in her new role at Scripps College!

Levitt Center presents discussion on Merkel legacy

by Emma Bowman '24
FEATURES EDITOR

Following the announcement of Germany's first new chancellor in 16 years, the Levitt Center presented a panel event featuring Alan Cafruny from the Government Department at Hamilton College, and Charlotte Carstens, a German Chancellor Fellow with Deutscher Städtetag.

During the talk, Professor Cafruny and Ms. Carstens reflected on Angela Merkel's chancellorship from 2005 to 2021 and what we can expect for the future of Germany.

Cafruny explained that when Merkel became chancellor, Germany had been outsourcing labor to other countries, which cut labor costs while retaining the core of manufacturing domestically.

Even though this process gave a boost to Germany's economy, it also actively destabilized it (along with the rest of European economies), as the euro is very undervalued in Germany compared to the rest of Europe.

Along with the other coalitions, Merkel faithfully carried this system out, while also understanding the constraints imposed by this political-economic model and the problems faced by the German capital. To some extent, under Merkel, Germany moved away from this extreme austerity and into a new generation of fiscal policy for the European Union.

However, Cafruny believes this new policy was modest and unlikely to make a significant structural difference. There is still a budgetary straightjacket in Europe, and the new coalition does not seem like it will be able to change that.

Though the media paints Germany as a preparatory powerhouse within Europe, it is also very vulnerable, specifically to China, which threatens Germany's automobile industry that makes up five percent of its GDP.

Merkel has always been outspoken regarding climate change throughout her political career, bringing attention to precisely the science of global warming on an international stage. However, Carstens claimed that Merkel's domestic climate policy was not as ambitious because she did not want to employ policies detrimental to German industry.

Further, Carstens pointed out that Germany's nuclear exit plan was an example of Merkel being pushed to implement new climate policies rather than acting on her own accord. When former chancellor Gerhard Schröder came up with a plan in 1998 to phase out nuclear power by 2022, Merkel "vehemently rejected this stance."

Then, when she became chancellor in 2005, she reversed Schröder's policy and decided to keep nuclear power around for a while longer. Less than six months later, the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster on Mar. 11, 2011 caused Merkel to promptly change course and promise to phase out nuclear power by 2022 after all.

In addition to nuclear power, there is a push to phase out coal energy—the dirtiest, most polluting energy source. Carstens stated that in 2013, coal energy was almost half of Germany's electricity production, but this has since decreased to about a quarter. A few years later, the German government set up a coal commission to develop a plan to phase out coal while taking into account the communities that depend on jobs in coal mines. The coal commission recommended Germany phase out coal by 2038. Even though this deadline is eight years after the Paris Agreement's deadline of 2030, Germany passed a law in 2020 to phase out coal by 2038. Germany's plan to phase out nuclear power and coal put the country in quite a bind as they search for alternative energy sources to go carbon neutral.

PHOTO BY GOOGLE IMAGES

Olaf Scholz and Angela Merkel at the prsentation of the 2019-2020 German annual finance report.

Although Merkel is globally passionate about protecting the climate, she caters to the automobile industry within her own country. Germany's transportation sector accounts for 20% of all its greenhouse gas emissions, and while emissions from all other sectors decreased under Merkel's chancellorship, transportation sector emissions have not decreased since 1990.

Additionally, when the European Union started discussing setting emission limits for cars, Merkel postponed the final decision until a year after the initial discussion. Carstens then described the final automobile emission limit decision as a "watered down" version.

According to Carstens, Merkel leaves behind a mixed legacy. On one hand, she was critical in gathering world leaders together and getting the ball rolling for conversations about climate change. On the other hand, her domestic climate policy is weak and somewhat disappointing.

The new coalition will be led by Olaf Scholz, who plans to incorporate members from three of Germany's major political parties—the Social Democrats, the Greens and the Free Democrats—into the new government.

Carstens expects the ministers to remain vocal about climate change on the world stage while nuclear power is still on track to be phased out by the end of next year. Surprisingly, the new coalition also already made the ambitious decision to phase coal out by 2030 to meet the Paris Agreement.

December 2, 2021

The argument for charter schools

by Will Rampe '24
STAFF WRITER

Former Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe seemed to seal his fate in the Virginia gubernatorial race during a Sep. 29 debate against Republican nominee Glenn Youngkin when he stated, "I don't think parents should be telling schools what they should teach."

This statement depicts division and disagreement regarding education policy and the role parents should have in it. Youngkin vowed to ban the teaching of "critical race theory" in public schools and build 20 additional charter schools. On the other hand, McAuliffe appeared with President of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Randi Weingarten, a notorious advocate for public education and opponent of charter schools. Weingarten previously claimed that charter schools result in segregation and poor education outcomes during an AFT conference, asserting that "this privatization and disinvestment are only slightly more polite cousins of segregation... We are in the same fight, against the same forces who are keeping the same children from getting the public education they need and deserve."

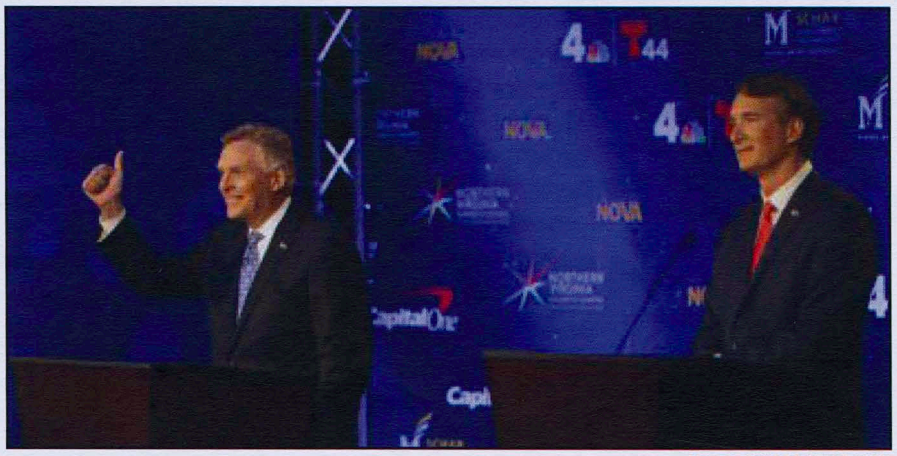


PHOTO BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

Terry McAuliffe and Glenn Youngkin on the debate stage.

Weingarten is not alone in her criticism. Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders also attacked charter schools when he stated that "few charter schools have lived up to their promise... Moreover, the proliferation of charter schools has disproportionately affected communities of color."

According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, charter schools are "independently-operated public schools that have the freedom to design classrooms that meet their students' needs." Charter schools do not charge tuition, and their admission is based on a lottery system. Youngkin's attacks on critical race theory are rather dubious, as theory is not explicitly a part of Virginia's K-12 curriculum. However, he is correct to promote charter schools as an alternative to traditional public schools. Despite claims from Weingarten and her Democrat allies that charter schools provide a less adequate education and negatively affect students of color, the facts point to a different conclusion.

When it comes to performance of charter schools, opponents point to a finding from the National Center for Education Statistics, which observed "no measurable differences in average reading and mathematics scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)... between students in traditional public and public charter schools." Opponents also invoke claims of segregation within charter schools, pointing out how charter schools are more racially isolated than public schools.

However, these arguments ignore the obvious benefits of charter schools. While there may be no aggregate differences between charter and public schools, charter schools educate a larger proportion of minority students, whose historically have had worse educational outcomes than white students. Economist Thomas Sowell explains this argument in his book "Charter Schools and Their Enemies" where he states that "in a realm where educational failure has long been the norm—schools in low-income minority neighborhoods—this is success, a remarkable success." This conclusion is supported by research from the Manhattan Institute, which finds that charter schools provide black students in poverty with an additional 59 days of learning in math and 44 days of learning in reading per year. The logic is simple: educational achievement has historically been worse amongst certain minority groups, so it should be seen as a step in the right direction if charter schools are accelerating the achievement of minority students to the level of groups like white students who have historially had better educational outcomes.

The claims of segregation within charter schools are also misguided. The idea that a higher level of minority students in charter schools mirrors school segregation in the Jim Crow South ignores the nuance behind the admissions processes of charter schools. Minority parents and students choose to attend charter schools over public schools by entering a highly competitive lottery system, a choice that simply did not exist for black students during Jim Crow, when segregation was legally enforced. This line of argument also implies that minority students cannot succeed academically unless their school is highly diverse. However, this has not been the case for charter schools and has no valid historical basis.

In an interview discussing his aforementioned book, Sowell tells the story of Dunbar High School, "a black elite school in Washington DC many years ago... [that] got all kinds of outstanding results. [In] one figure [from] 1953, 81% of Dunbar graduates went on to college, which was higher than for any white public high school in Washington DC." Sowell's highlight of Dunbar High School does not serve as a critique of school integration, but instead shows that primarily minority schools can and have demonstrated high levels of academic achievement. This legacy is reflected in many charter schools to this day.

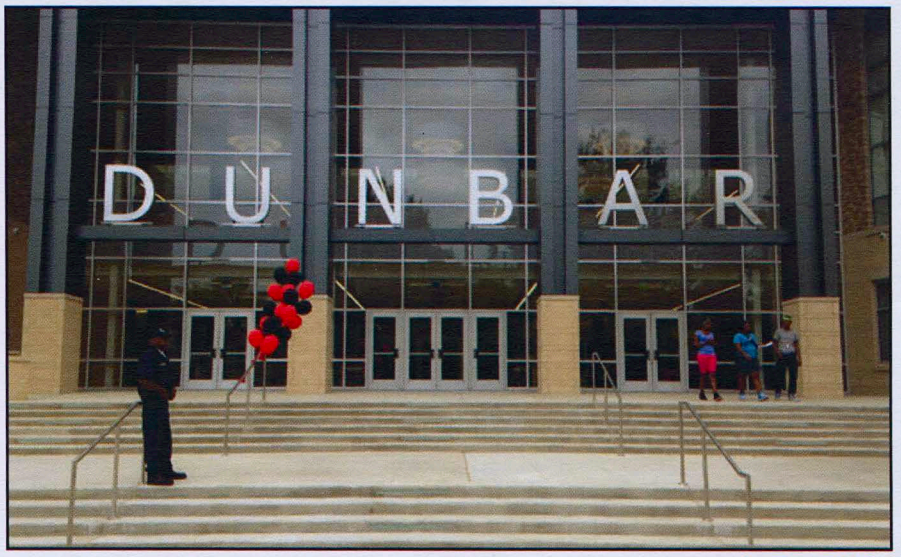


PHOTO BY WTOP NEWS

The outside of Dunbar High School, located in Washington, D.C.

So why do prominent Democrats oppose charter schools despite their achievements? The answer lies in their desire to maintain the support of teachers' unions. According to the government transparency group Open Secrets, donations from teachers' unions grew from $4.3 million to $32 million from 2004 to 2016, with 94% of all donated funds going to Democrats.

Charter schools are a natural opposition to teachers' unions because students who leave their local public schools in favor of charter schools take their money with them, leaving less money immediately available for public schools. This affects unionized teachers' salaries and their jobs because a decrease in students leads to a decrease in demand for public school teachers.

Opposition to charter schools does not take students into consideration. It instead focuses on appealing for the political support of teachers' unions. If the goal of educational policy is to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for all students regardless of race or class, it is obvious that supporting charter schools is a necessity.

December 2, 2021

Common Ground Fall 2021: income inequality in the United States

by Edward Gamble '25
STAFF WRITER

This year's Common Ground on the causes, consequences and policy responses to income inequality in the United States (U.S.) occurred on Monday, Nov. 15. The guest speakers were Greg Mankiw, the Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers for the Bush administration, and Christina Romer, the Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers for the Obama administration. While each administration had vastly different economic policies, Mankiw and Romer hold similar positions, apart from possible solutions.

PHOTO BY HAMILTON COLLEGE

(L-R) Christina Romer, Moderator and Henry Bristol Platt Professor of Economics Ann Owen, and Greg Mankiw at this year's Common Ground.

Mankiw centered his discussion on the increase of technology that replaces the need for unskilled workers, compared to education, which creates skilled workers. Additionally, he expressed confidence in our society's ability to find a way of making up for the inequality caused by the rapid increase in technology, which he noted we have done in the past. Mankiw believes that improving education is the best way to lessen inequality, but he stressed the difficulties in creating good policy and the vital importance of limited government intervention. Romer agreed, for the most part, with this basic framework, although she expressed a more hands-on approach to solving inequality, preferring action even if the consequences of doing so are not crystal-clear. The event intended to facilitate a civil discussion between two different parties, not a debate, so there is not a clear winner.

Romer provided a better explanation to fix the problem of technology, education, and inequality. She actively advocated for certain policies which would increase human capital, whereas Mankiw merely stated that it is hard to know what to do. Mankiw's argument relies upon past trends of humans surpassing inequality. However, the rate of technological change is currently unparalleled in its rapidity. We cannot simply have confidence that inequality will work itself out when we are living in such an unprecedented time. The discussion about the Build Back Better Bill, specifically the part about free community college, illustrates this principle. Romer believes that free community college is the next step to increase education rates, and she supports a progressive tax to obtain funding. Mankiw likes the idea of free community college, but thinks that it should be instituted through a flat tax rate, a position similar to his concerning Social Security. However, I think that a progressive tax is essential to fund a program that is meant to reduce inequality. Given that low-income people require more economic help relative to those with higher incomes, it does not make sense that each socioeconomic group should have to pay the same proportion of taxes for projects that are meant to aid those with greater need, especially as COVID-19 has abetted current trends of inequality. Mankiw's preference for a flat tax rate limits his possibilities; by not fully tapping into the wealthiest tax brackets, his vision runs the risk of raising insufficient funds to fully tackle the issue of inequality at hand.

The globalization that has occurred in the past 20 years changes the nature of inequality. It will continue to be cheaper for more developed countries to outsource their unskilled labor to less developed countries to keep costs down. Simply put, until there is no significant discrepancy between how much a worker from the US and any other nation is paid for a certain task, the demand for unskilled workers domestically will continue to decrease, as it will remain cheaper for employers to produce in foreign countries. Additionally, technology has been increasing exponentially in the past 20 years. Our rate of technological growth is so much larger than preceding periods where counting on humans to adapt is not a safe bet. The government has a responsibility to its people to work to increase their citizens' quality of life; it is better to try and do something about a problem, even if those efforts end up in vain, than to just hope that it will resolve itself.

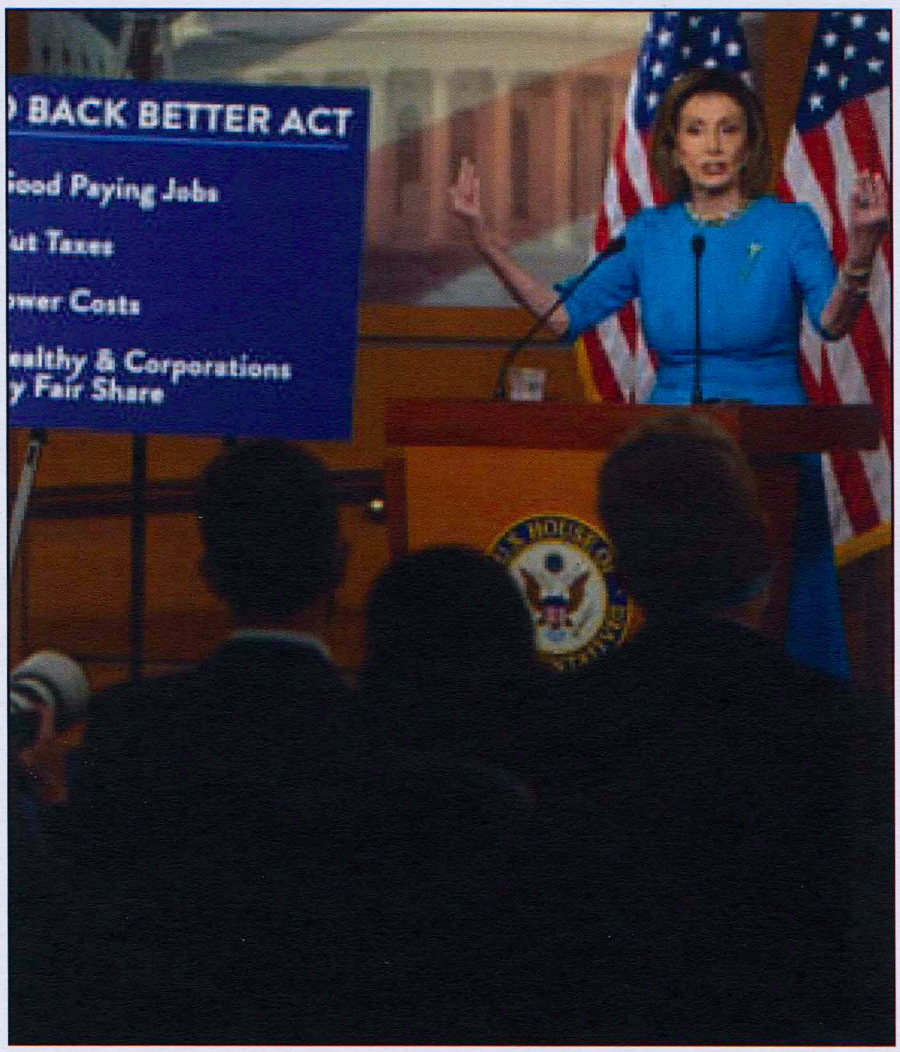


PHOTO BY THE GUARDIAN

Nancy Pelosi presenting the merits of the Build Back Better Act.

Titane (2021): A violent and nuanced exploration of bodies and families

by Katherine Kim '22
A&E EDITOR

Content warning: this review describes graphic imagery and mentions of body horror.

French film director Julia Ducournau's newest film, *Titane*, has been highly praised by both critics and audiences alike since its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival earlier this year, where it won the highest award, the Palme d'Or. Twitter and Letterboxd are filled with reviews of the film, which all talk about how shocking and unforgettable it is. Indeed, *Titane* is a strange and visceral tale, but it uses its strangeness to its advantage; the twists and impossibilities that happen in the film take audiences on a ride of a lifetime.

Titane is the story of Alexia, a dancer with a titanium plate lodged in her head who lives with her negligent parents. This is quite possibly the easiest element to explain in the film, as *Titane* quickly descends into chaos once Alexia is introduced. In the first thiry minutes, the film reveals that Alexia is a serial murderer, that she has an unusual attraction to metallic objects and that she has sex with a car (yes, you read that right). But none of this is included in the film for mere shock value. In fact, the absurd events in Alexia's journey allows Ducournau to show the ways in which bodies can transform and create unexpected bonds.

Every moment in *Titane* is motivated by bodies, from the ways they move to the ways in which they can change. The film introduces Alexia seductively dancing on top of the car she later has sex with. When Alexia is on the run from the police, she takes drastic measures to transform herself by changing parts of her body, like cutting her hair and breaking her nose. She then presents herself as Adrien Legrand, missing son of Vincent Legrand, a firefighter chief who searched for his son for ten years. Alexia's transformation leads Vincent to abruptly adopt her into his fire station, and both of them eventually find themselves in an awkward, yet loving, familial relationship. Ducournau continually uses dance scenes that highlight Alexia and Vincent's bodies to reflect their level of trust with each other. Even when Alexia's body eventually grows strangely pregnant from the car, Vincent does not run in fear, and instead becomes a kinder father figure towards her. Ducournau intends to show the film's audiences just how much bodies can do, and it almost feels wondrous to see how many different things a body is capable of.

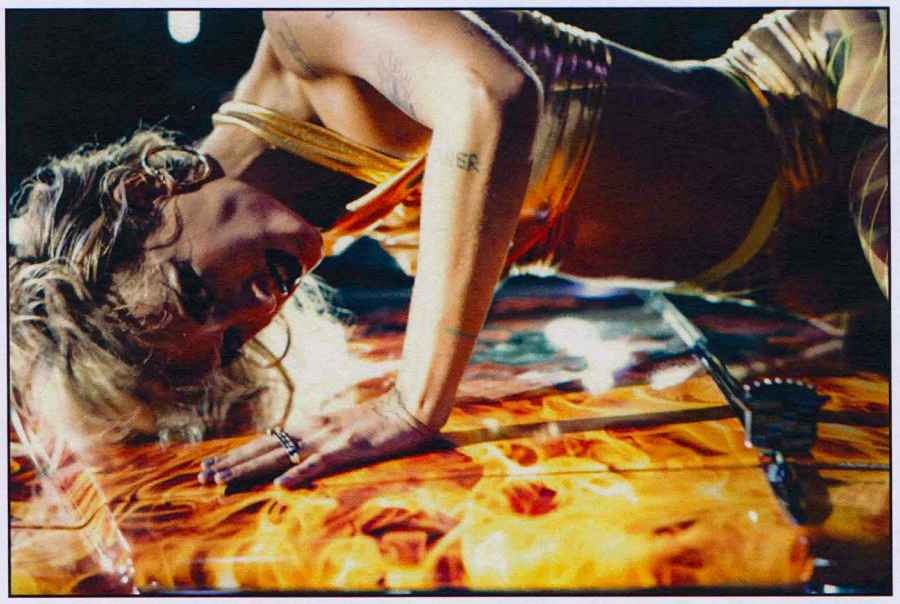


PHOTO BY CINEVILLE

Protagonist Alexia dances atop of the car that will later become integral to *Titane*'s plot.

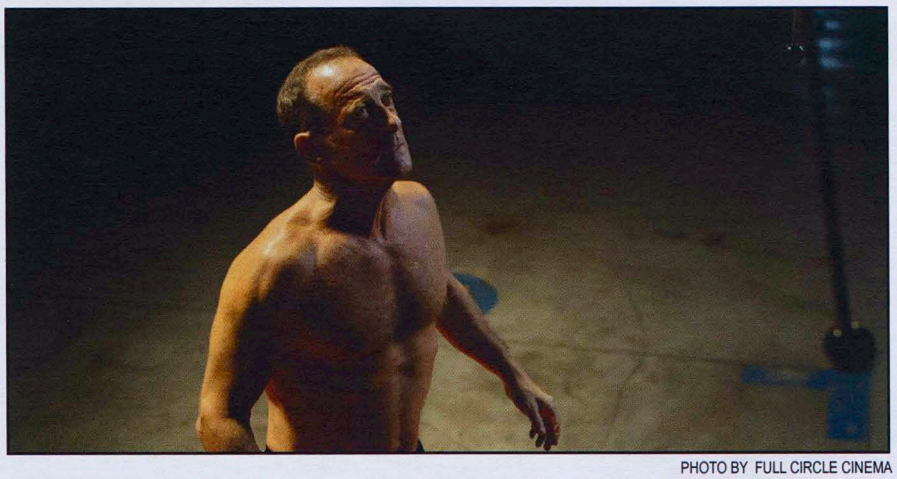


PHOTO BY FULL CIRCLE CINEMA

Vincent Legrand, the secondary protagonist of *Titane*, attempts to come to terms with the limits of his body.

PHOTO BY NEON

Alexia and Vincent dance and show their trust in each other.

Though many have called *Titane* a body-horror film, specifically citing that most of the horror comes from Alexia growing pregnant with a car-child, Ducournau treats the pregnancy as something that attracts more love than fear. There is still motor oil instead of blood, metal instead of skin, but Alexia nevertheless grows closer to Vincent through the pregnancy. When she initially attempts to hide her growing belly, he asks no questions and simply allows herself to feel comfortable in her own skin, which leads her to tentatively trust him with the truth of her body. Vincent thus turns into the thoughtful and considerate parent that she never had, and, near the end of *Titane*, swears to take care of her child. Despite the pregnancy appearing like a violent sci-fi nightmare, it still manages to build a family with tender dynamics. The car-child is not abandoned, Alexia receives the parental attention she always wanted and Vincent finally re-experiences fatherhood by adopting Alexia. Amidst all the horror, there is still familial intimacy.

That being said, *Titane* is definitely not for the lighthearted. It is unapologetically violent, throws twist after twist in its narrative, and requires its audience to deeply reflect upon the ideas it presents to them. Knowing this, it is not surprising that Ducournau managed to win the hearts of many with *Titane*, as she crafted a film that includes plenty of entertainment and nuanced themes. *Titane is now playing in select theatres everywhere.*

No Time to Die: Daniel Craig says bye to Bond

by Nicholas Cackett '24
STAFF WRITER

A poignant finale for Daniel Craig's tenure as the iconic James Bond, Director Cary Joji Fukunaga's *No Time to Die* (2021) provides a more somber interpretation of the main character as he races to save the world once again. Directly following the events of the previous installment, *Spectre* (2015), the movie shows a retired James Bond as he attempts to begin a new life with his love interest Madeleine Swann (Léa Seydoux) and leave his old life behind. However, tragedy strikes and Bond is dragged back into the fray, encountering new, as well as familiar, faces along the way.

The film sees the return of the new M (Ralph Fiennes), Q (Ben Whishaw) and Miss Moneypenny (Naomie Harris) in their usual supporting roles as they help the retired MI6 agent against the villainous Safin (Rami Malek). Bond also meets a host of new characters, including the new 007 (Lashana Lynch) and charming CIA agent Paloma (Ana De Armas), who brings refreshing new energy.

The plot is straightforward and a little cliché at times, though there are enough twists and turns that inject originality into the franchise and keep things entertaining for the audience. The film begins with Bond having once again dropped off the radar in retirement, losing all contact with his former agency. However, trouble comes,and he is forced to return when an evil scheme is unveiled that threatens the entire world. A biological weapon, DNA-targeting nanobots that can infect and kill millions, has fallen into the wrong hands, and it is up to Bond, the CIA and MI6 to stop them before it is released. Various firefights and car chases ensue, showcasing stunning visuals accompanied by a Hans Zimmer soundtrack.

The movie's strong suits are its characters and their relationships with each other, having been established in previous films and culminating in an emotional climax. Bond's relationship with Swann takes center stage and propels much of the story forward, becoming a core aspect of the movie. It is important to note that the film contains several allusions to previous Bond movies, creating a continuity that ties Craig's films together and brings his arc to a conclusive end. While not necessary to have watched all the other movies, it certainly makes the callbacks and plot more enjoyable.

No Time to Die contains all the usual Bond tropes—the sex appeal, the action-packed sequences, the evil villain looking to destroy the world and the all-around coolness of the lead actor. However, there is an ever-present feeling of somberness that we have not quite seen in previous films, as we are presented with a more introspective and serious Bond. Craig's departure as the agent unexpectedly tugs at the heartstrings, as he delivers a final portrayal of the secret agent that is more emotional than Craig's previous versions of the character.

The film's biggest struggles are with its villains and its long run-time of 163 minutes. Though Malek's Safin was played well by the actor, he ultimately feels dull and unoriginal. The audience does not get much out of him, and his story feels like one we have heard time and time again. Pair this with a run-time that feels a little too long at times, and some viewers can be put-off. However, the movie provides enough theatrical fireworks and charm, mixed in with a bittersweet farewell for Craig's Bond that it is worth overlooking its flaws.

There were several standout performances, most notably from De Armas, Seydoux and Craig himself. De Armas gives a great new character with Paloma, a witty and exciting CIA agent who quickly becomes a highlight of the movie despite her short screen time. Seydoux's Madeleine Swann brings out Bond's emotional side and gives audiences a different perspective on the usually stoic agent. Craig delivers a great performance, captivating audiences and making a memorable impression. This James Bond is different than his predecessors, as he is grittier and more open, though he retains the charm and suaveness the agent is known for, capturing that sweet spot that sets him apart.

Overall, it might not be the greatest Bond film, but it is certainly worth a watch, concluding Daniel Craig's run as what one could argue is the best James Bond. The movie has many of the aspects we have come to expect from the franchise, but it is not afraid to try something new and daring, much like its titular character. Craig delivers the best portrayal of the dashing rogue we have seen yet, giving a vulnerable yet powerful Bond that one will not soon forget.

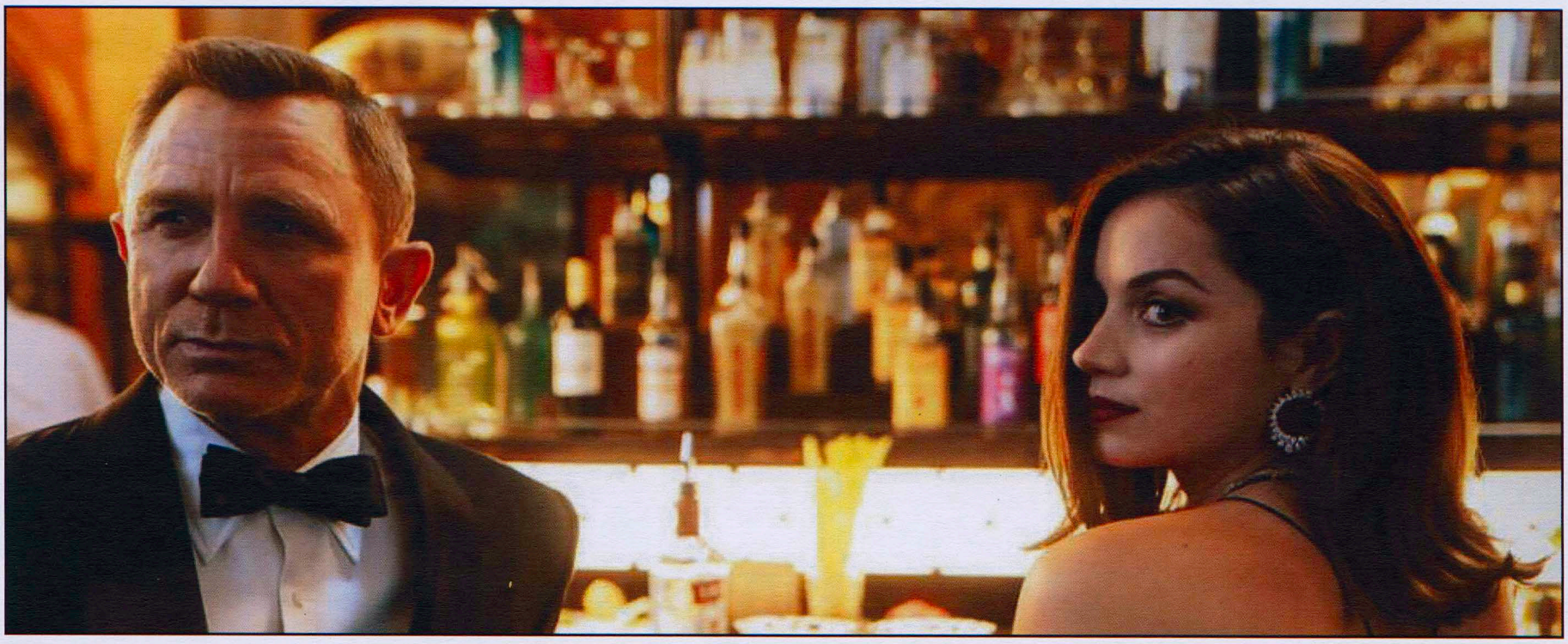


PHOTO BY MGM

Daniel Craig and Ana de Armas star as James Bond and Paloma respectively in Cary Joji Fukunaga's *No Time to Die* (2021).

Student Assembly survey results

by *The Spectator* Staff

On Oct. 28, *The Spectator* published an article regarding the ten resignations this semester from Hamilton College's Student Assembly (SA). A couple of weeks later, *The Spectator* sent out a survey to the student body via email, as a follow-up to the article, inquiring about the student body's opinion on student government at Hamilton and what students would like to see in their student government. Students had from Nov. 4 to Nov. 9 to fill out the survey. 44 students responded to the survey, compiled anonymously, with a mix of opinions and results. Below are a collection of questions and randomly-selected responses to the questions, as we could not include all of the responses on two pages. Each set of quotes denotes a new response. If you have any questions, or would like to see more results, please contact spec@hamilton.edu.

PHOTO BY HAMILTON COLLEGE

What do you see as the biggest issue currently facing student government at Hamilton?

"A lack of openness on behalf of the administration."

"The lack of representation for the 'common' student."

"They fail to represent the interests of the student body. Not only do they often take on large issues that most students are indifferent about, but in the process, they consider issues like parking, dining, etc (issues most important to students) as background priorities. They are antagonistic toward the administration, and as a result, the administration feels little inclination to help the assembly tackle issues. Certain Assembly members in particular, like Eric, seem to dislike dissent or disagreement within the assembly, even if that dissent represents sentiments of the student body."

"They don't have the power to do anything effective," "Echo chamber," "Eric Stenzel," "I don't feel well-represented."

"The cancel culture in student government that stems from the SA President," "Lack of fully open discussion and debate"

What do you think the role of student government should be in the college's decision-making process?

"To represent the opinions of the student body, and to communicate them to administration"

"To put it bluntly, I don't want the student assembly to have a lot of power in college decision-making because I don't think the Student Assembly is very much in touch with the sentiments of the student body. I would be curious to know what percentage of the student body actually votes for the student assembly...When students, especially first-years, are just getting readjusted to school and starting new classes, how can you expect them to focus on the Student Assembly election?...I do not believe that the current student assembly truly represents the interests of the students and thus I don't desire it to have more power in the college decision-making process. However, if we could reform the electoral process and create more opportunities for students to hold their representatives accountable, then I would ideally like it to have more power in decision-making. I would like the assembly to be able to have input on major decisions and perhaps even have a vote on certain college proposals...

"They should have an advisory position. A group of 18-22 year olds do not know how to run a school, so they should not have say over much administrative matters. However, the administration should put their advice and suggestions foremost above those of other groups. While Student Assembly should not be making decisions, they should be heavily influential in the making of decisions, if that makes sense."

"Student assembly should approve decisions made by the college, but must be consulted on factors that went into those decisions. The college should be more transparent about those decisions, as that has led to some of the tension."

"They should be telling the school what the students actually want, not just what the people on SA want. Essentially they should be the advisors to the college about what students want."

"SA should be in the loop about big discussions that come up on the administrative level and be able to have their input considered."

"I think SA should be a voice for students. We should be a true student union, not a "bridge" between students and admin."

"It should have more authority. Decision over SAF and J-Board. Someone on board of trustees"

"We are the students. We should get to decide on student matters."

What do you think should be the relationship between student government and the administration at Hamilton?

"Ideally, they would be able to work together and the administration would listen to and respect student government. However, a positive relationship requires the administrations effort, not just all the effort student government has already put in.," "Collaborative and cohesive."

"They should have equal footing at least."

"Collaborative; rather than have an entirely hostile relationship (that renders any ability at student governance null and void). Yes, the college admin are terrible. But constantly fighting with them takes away SA's important focus on STUDENT NEEDS."

"It needs to be stronger, but it is also important to recognize that students are going to disagree with administration and that is perfectly fine. What matters is how these dissenting opinions are conveyed and how we

convince/encourage administration to listen to our concerns."

"The ideal relationship between the administration and the student assembly would be a partnership. I would want the administration and assembly to regularly consult with each other to ensure the interests of the student body are met...The student assembly does not have to worry about managing college finances, hiring faculty, and just overall ensuring the future viability of the college. Since representatives only serve a short time and because the student body shifts dramatically each year, the student assembly, by its very nature, will acts with the short-term in mind. Thus, I definitely don't think they should be equal to the administration or have a veto. But I do think they should have input, I do think they should be taken seriously, and I do think they should be able to vote on certain measures."

"Amicable as long as there is mutual respect."

"They should not antagonize each other, and hopefully both sides want to work towards meaningful change."

"I think they should work together because ultimately both are intrinsically linked. We can advocate for change and they (usually) have the finally say due to the power dynamic. I understand the current assembly want radical change to this dynamic and I am all for it, but they have in my failed thus far. If failure is the alternative then I would rather aim to work together for achievable reforms."

"It should be a legal one, otherwise they will never have to listen to us. The relationship of SG and administration needs to be outlined in an official document signed off on by the Board of Trustees."

How effective is the current student government at Hamilton? (Scale 1-10, 1 least, 10 most)

1 - 12 respondents (27.3%)
2 - 7 respondents (15.9%)
3 - 11 respondents (25%)
4 - 7 respondents (15.9%)
5 - 2 respondents (4.5%)
6 - 3 respondents (6.8%)
7 - 2 respondents (4.5%)
8, 9, 10 - 0 respondents

How representative do you think the student government is of the student body at Hamilton? (Scale 1-10, 1 least, 10 most)

1 - 12 respondents (27.3%)
2 - 7 respondents (15.9%)
3 - 6 respondents (13.6%)
4 - 3 respondents (13.6%)
5 - 6 respondents (4.5%)
6 - 3 respondents (6.8%)
7 - 6 respondents (13.6%)
8 - 1 respondents (2.3%)
9, 10 - 0 respondents

How many individuals should be on the assembly?

1-10: 0% agreed
10-20: 27.3% agreed
20-30: 45.5% agreed
40-50: 13.6% agreed
50-60: 13.6% agreed

What should be the makeup of the Assembly?

Class Representatives and Class Presidents: 100% agreed
Class Treasurers: 65.9% agreed
E-Board members: 70.5% agreed
Representatives from various constituencies (Greek life, sports, etc): 68.2% agreed
Liaisons from various areas on campus (LITS, wellness, etc): 72.7% agreed

How can the student government increase participation from the general student body?

Main results

More surveys: 27.3%
Tabling on campus and talking to students: 20.5%
Having Class reps host drop ins for their classmates to provide feedback: 11.4%
More social events: 11.4%
All of the above: 18.18%

Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the student government at Hamilton?

"I've been in another overwhelming, highly stressful organizational leadership setting that I (and many others) have had to quit because we couldn't handle it anymore. Part of this issue was how small it was with the amount of work/conflicting goals we wanted to do. I feel like SA should more aggressively recruit new students so each individual student has less pressure on them and less to do, while still being able to accomplish bigger goals...elections need to be more competitive and students need to vote more so that those elected actually represent the student body and not just the small group of students who vote."

"It needs heavy reforming. If anything, it should be disbanded and a new constitution drawn up over break. Sadly, no one takes Student Assembly too seriously and it needs to be run more efficiently, effectively, and lose its activist element, and prevent individuals like those in the current leadership from taking over Student Assembly and turning it into their weekly airing of grievances and place to implement their pet projects. They are here to serve the students, not themselves."

"I think many of the assembly members, including many that quit, do not serve the student body. I would like to thank President Eric Santomauro-Stenzel for speaking up about issues which matter and for supporting students even when the administration opposed us. I would also like to thank Sapphire for their time on student assembly."

"I wish I was proud of my school's student government and that I felt represented by them, but I just don't. I wish I felt like they prioritized fun events for the community, current issues, and the relationship between us and the admin, but right now I just feel like they worry about getting reelected and internal politics."

"It isn't about you. It is about the students. It tends to be more of a resume building tbh. Actually talk to the students. Actually do something to get admin to take you seriously. I do not care about weed reform. I care about sexual assault and classes and mental health."

"Student government should conduct surveys on students' perspectives for the issues they plan on tackling so that their actions are directly informed by their constituents."

"Right now I think it is only a matter of time until new leadership comes in that is hopefully more open to change and healthy collaboration."

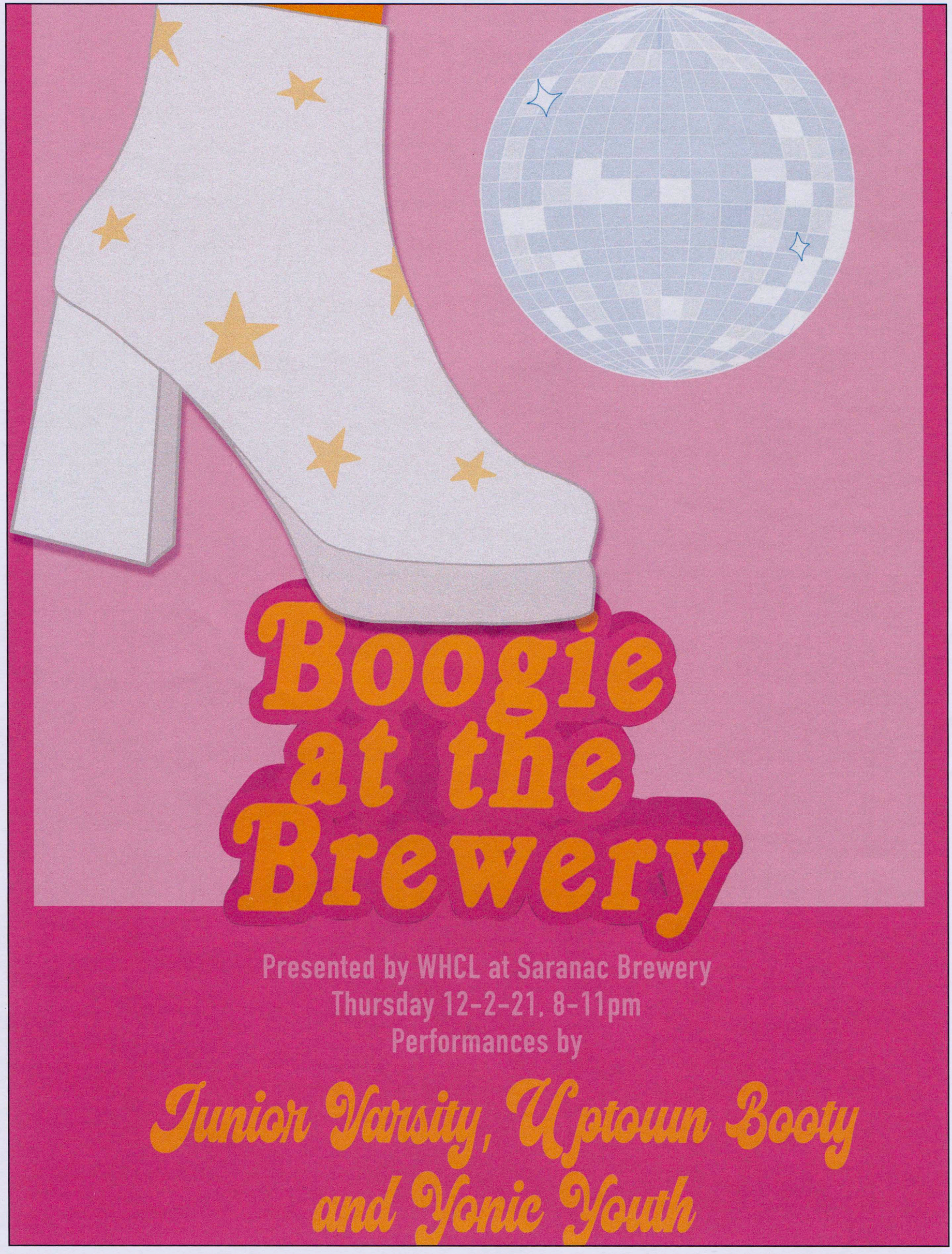
"The current Student Assembly needs to start over and dissolve. There needs to be a fresh start with new voices."

"More reps from different areas of campus would increase the chance that admin would take them seriously."

"Admin needs to stop taking away power from SA and students, and SA needs to stop cowing to Admin."

"Elect a new executive board, the current one has been horrible."

"Make sure everyone's voice is heard."


Boogie at the Brewery
Presented by WHCL at Saranac Brewery
Thursday 12-2-21, 8-11pm
Performances by
Junior Varsity, Uptoun Booty and Yonic Youth

December 2, 2021

Athlete Spotlight: Nancy Loh '23

by Sam Dils '22
SPORTS EDITOR

The women's hockey team is off to a fantastic start. Behind back-to-back NESCAC wins against nationally ranked #8 Amherst College, the team ranked tenth in the latest national poll, currently sitting at 4-0 early in the season.

After missing the entirety of last season due to the pandemic, the team has plenty of standout performances to date. Many players have returned hungry and eager to improve on a successful 2019-20 season where the team finished fourth in the NESCAC and reached the semifinals in the conference tournament.

So far this season, a number of contributors have pitched in to help the team earn their several victories. In the team's first matchup against Amherst on Nov. 20, Allie Curry '23 scored two third-period goals to propel the team to a 3-1 win. The next day, Sidney Molnar '22 made an impressive 36 saves, warding off late power-play attempts from the Mammoths to earn a 2-0 shutout win. Molnar has already earned three wins in net for the team.

Another standout on the ice have been defenseman Abby Kuhns '23, who leads the team with four assists through four games. Mya Berretta '22 has one goal and three assists; that goal was the game winner against SUNY Morrisville on Nov. 23, which capped off an epic third-period comeback. Trailing 3-1 with just over 15 minutes left to play, Abby Smith '23, Maura Holden '23 and Berretta scored in quick succession to earn the 4-3 come-from-behind win.

Captain Nancy Loh '23 has made a massive impact as well, leading the team with five points on two goals and three assists. Both of her goals were game winners, the first coming as the opening goal in the 2-0 Amherst win, and the second securing a 3-2 win over Utica College on Nov. 28. *The Spectator* sat down with Loh to break down the team's early success and look ahead to a promising season.

COURTESY OF HAMILTON COLLEGE

Nancy Loh '23 has led the attack for the 4-0 hockey team

The team is off to a great start at 4-0 and up to #10 in the country. Why do you think the team has been able to find success right out of the gate?

Everyone has been so eager to play after a long break so we are all just really happy to have competition again. More than half of our team had never played in a college game before last weekend, so it is a new experience for all of us. We are just working hard and supporting each other. It is great to be back on the ice after such a long break, so we're having fun.

The team has already made a couple of third-period comebacks against both Amherst and Morrisville. What do these wins reflect about the team?

The NESCAC is a competitive league and I expect that all of our games will be battles and will force us to work until the last buzzer. We have a lot of heart and have learned that if we keep working hard good things can happen.

You have made a huge impact so far with two goals and three assists. What are you hoping to bring to the team this season as a captain on and off the ice?

We have a lot of talent on this team and everyone is contributing in both practices and games. As a junior, I know that the season is long and it's important that we have confidence and believe in our team and each other. We need to continue to learn from our mistakes and challenges, stay positive and stay together. I'm hoping to keep the energy high and make sure everyone continues to work hard and have fun. Off the ice, I'm hoping that everyone likes the movie selection I have for bus trips.

COURTESY OF HAMILTON COLLEGE

Allie Curry '23 puts one past the Amherst goaltender.

This weekend, you will face Williams, a historically tough NESCAC opponent, in a doubleheader at home. What are your expectations for these games?

Our last matchup against Williams (more than 640 days ago) was a battle down to the last second. We are expecting them to come out even harder and faster than the last time we played them because every conference game is so important. We are all excited for another competitive NESCAC weekend in Sage and I hope everyone comes out to support us!

Looking forward to the rest of the season, what are some of your big team goals as you move through the winter?

I like to take it one game at a time and I think we need to have this mindset as a team. Ultimately, my goal is for us to compete hard every game so that we are at our best come playoff time. I am also looking forward to seeing everyone become closer as a team off the ice and seeing this team chemistry translate into how we play on the ice.

Lightning Round

Any personal superstitions before games?

I try not to think about superstitions so I don't get in my head.

Go-to game day meal?

PB&J.

Teammate with a secret talent?

Maura Holden '23 makes some crazy realistic bird noises.

Song or artist on your personal pregame playlist?

Two Friends.

Best part of Thanksgiving break?

Pie night with our family friends.

December 2, 2021

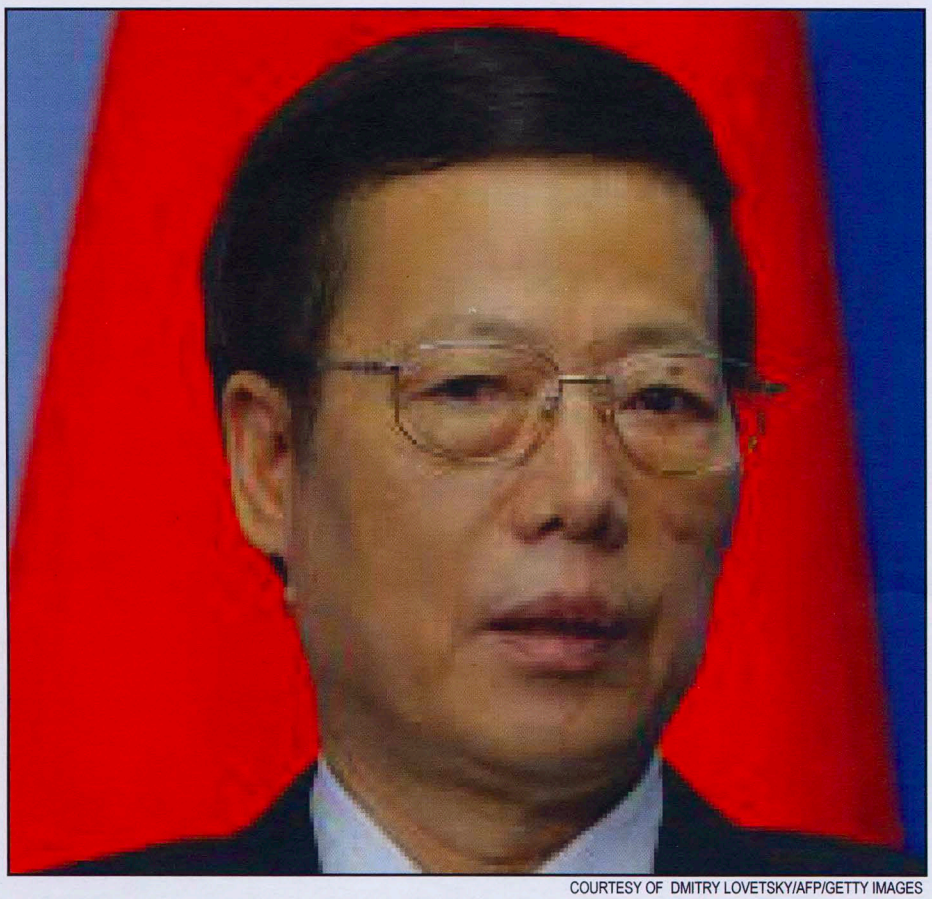
WTA suspends tournaments in China

by Owen Lewis '24
SPORTS EDITOR

On Dec. 1, the chairman of the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), Steve Simon, announced that WTA events in China would be suspended. The decision stemmed from China's disturbing response to the doubles player Peng Shuai making sexual assault allegations on Nov. 16 against Zhang Gaoli, a former Vice Premier of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Peng published her allegations on the Chinese social media site Weibo. Within minutes, the post had been taken down, and screenshots of the post were censored. It became impossible to search for Peng's verified account; comment sections from her previous posts were taken down. The immediate and extreme response, all to scrub any mention of sexual assault allegations against a former government official, was disturbing. But the bigger concern was Peng Shuai: where was she? If the government had gone after her social media with such appalling speed, what had they done to her?

#WhereIsPengShuai began to trend on Twitter. Big news outlets such as *CNN*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* reported on concerns over Peng. Jen Psaki, the White House Press Secretary, even mentioned that President Biden wanted "verifiable proof" of Peng's location and well-being. Chinese government social media accounts released an email supposedly written by Peng, but the language was extremely cookie-cutter (the email included a hope that Chinese tennis would continue to prosper in the future, which was completely irrelevant to the concerns about her status). Few bought that she actually wrote it. The letter walked back the allegations she had made just days earlier, adding to the doubt that Peng wrote it. Photos and video followed, which were more encouraging, but again, there was an air of uneasiness. She was confirmed to be alive—a relief—but was she forced to be taking part in these photos and videos? Had she gotten to choose the words she was saying? Thomas Bach, the President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), had a half-hour video call with Peng on Nov. 21, but the IOC's website did not offer a clip of the call, only a screenshot and a dinky three-paragraph description. The article bizarrely included the detail that Bach invited Peng to dinner with a couple other IOC employees, a detail as worthless as the hope that China's tennis program will prosper. Suspicion remained: #WhereIsPengShuai became #FreePengShuai. There is currently no way of knowing her true status, with Peng herself still yet to speak up with a clear lack of coercion.



COURTESY OF DMITRY LOVETSKY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Zhang Gaoli, accused of sexual assault by Peng Shuai, has been silent since the start of this story on Nov. 16.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WIKIPEDIA

There has been concern over Chinese doubles player Peng Shuai's well-being since Nov. 16

Steve Simon, to his credit, has maintained that China's response has been unacceptable from the beginning. Through a series of statements released by the WTA, he first expressed concern over Peng's well-being, and then doubts that she was speaking up without coercion or intimidation. "The WTA has been clear on what is needed here, and we repeat our call for a full and transparent investigation—without censorship—into Peng Shuai's sexual assault accusation," was a poignant part of today's statement. Simon has backed up his words with actions: by not participating in tournaments in China next year, the WTA will lose a considerable amount of money. The 2019 year-end finals tournament in Beijing had a bigger prize pot than the men's tournament in London, which was a big success for the WTA. But out of concern for Peng Shuai—and other players, should another WTA tournament happen in China—Simon is prepared to take the loss. "In good conscience," the statement included, "I don't see how I can ask our athletes to compete there when Peng Shuai is not allowed to communicate freely and has seemingly been pressured to contradict her allegation of sexual assault." Morals, refreshingly, are being prioritized over profit by a major sports organization.

This story is not likely to end well. The CCP has shown no signs of backing down. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, Zhao Lijian, said last week "I hope certain people will cease malicious hyping [of the Peng Shuai story]." There has been nothing resembling the start of an investigation into possible sexual assault by Zhang Gaoli. Peng Shuai's true status is unclear; no media has surfaced credibly indicating that she is enjoying freedom. Zhang Gaoli has not spoken up since the beginning of this tragic arc, and he has not had to—he is the one being accused of sexual assault, yet he is the one benefitting from his government's actions. The picture is horrifyingly backwards.

Victims of many #MeToo cases struggle to be believed. Peng Shuai is struggling just to be heard. Through the amplification of her story, and the consistent stance that China behaved unacceptably regarding her case, perhaps her voice can be made a little bit louder.